

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS
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USCINCEUR
CINCUSNAVEUR
CINCUSAFE
CINCUSAREUR
USNMR SHAPE
USDOCOSOUTH
USDOCOLANDSOUTHEAST

C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 2006

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, MPOL, NATO, GR
SUBJECT: NATO CEREMONIALS

REF: ATHENS 1895 (NOTAL)

1. TWO RECENT HIGH-LEVEL ALLIANCE MILITARY PROTOCOL VISITS TO GREECE RECEIVED ONLY MINIMAL PUBLIC NOTICE AND THE GREEK GOVERNMENT TOOK A SMALL YET VISIBLE TOWARD NATO BY AUTHORIZING A RETURN CALL.

2. ADMIRAL TURNER'S FAREWELL CALLS AS SINCSOUTH ON FEBRUARY 25-26 (REFTEL) IMMEDIATELY PRECEDED A VISIT BY THE OUTGOING NATO MILITARY COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN, ADMIRAL SIR PETER HILL-NORTON. BOTH WERE RECEIVED BY THE DEFENSE MINISTER AND SENIOR GREEK MILITARY
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OFFICERS. HILL-NORTON ALSO SAW THE FOREIGN MINISTER. PUBLICITY WAS MINIMAL AND FACTUAL, SAVE FOR PREDICTABLY CRITICAL COVERAGE IN MOSCOW-ORIENTED COMMUNIST RIZOSPASTIS. (IN ADDITION, THE TRAVEL OF COMLANDSOUTHEAST GENERAL KNOWLTON TO ATHENS AND THESSALONIKI IN MID-FEBRUARY, WITH SIMILAR OFFICE CALLS, ENGENDERED NO PUBLICITY.)

3. SUBSEQUENTLY, THE GOG ACCEPTED INVITATIONS TO ATTEND THE CINCSOUTH CHANGE-OF-COMMAND CEREMONY AA AN ACTION WITH POST-1974 PRECEDENT -- AND SENT THE CHIEFS OF THE HELLENIC ARMED FORCES (DAVOS) AND AIR FORCE (ECONOMOU) TO NAPLES ON MARCH 2. MOST NEWSPAPERS SIMPLY QUOTED A BRIEF DEFENSE MINISTRY ANNOUNCEMENT ON THE TRIP. COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE INTERIOR'S AVGHI AND LEFTIST OPPOSITION TA NEA, HOWEVER, IGNORED THE MATTER; AND RIZOSPASTIS RELATED THESE CONTACTS TO AN ALLEGED "BROADER EFFORT" TO "RE-WARM" GREECE'S ATLANTIC ALLIANCE TIES, IN TURN ALLEGEDLY CONNECTED WITH THE CLIFFORD MISSION. A MARCH 3 RIZOSPASTIS EDITORIAL STRETCHED THIS CONNECTION BEYOND MERE "PROTOCOL" TO EMCOMPASS BOTH AN INSISTENCE ON "RE-CAGING" GREECE IN NATO AND ALSO AN INSINUATION THAT ORAL ARRANGEMENTS WOULD "SWEETEN" GREEN RE-ENTRY INTO NATO UNDER ALLIED PRESSURE.

4. COMMENT: SUCH CEREMONIAL GESTURES ARE COMPARATIVELY EASIER FOR THE GOG TO MAKE NOW. ALTHOUGH THEY DO NOT CONTRIBUTE MUCH INTERMS OF SUBSTANTIVE RE-ENTRY INTO NATO'S INTEGRATED MILITARY STRUCTURE, IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT THESE SMALL STEPS NEITHER ATTRACT MUCH ADVERSE ATTENTION NOR NECESSITATE A PUBLIC DEFENSE.

MILLS

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